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STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

MULTINATIONAL FORCE STRUCTURES IN NATO

BY

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USAWC Strategy Research Project

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Abstract

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There is unanimous consent that multinational military alliances or coalitions will be the primary way to go to war in the future. Multinational forces are becoming ever more important as an instrument of crisis management, both politically and militarily. Today, security and freedom of action are guaranteed not by national autonomy and sovreignty, but by integration. It makes little sense, therefore, not to have well-established multinational formations in a peacetime. NATO has already decided increasingly to rely on multinational forces as part of its New Strategic Concept. Almost all NATO countries are contributing to multinational forces, including the United States.

This article will shed some light onto the subject of "multinational forces", highlight some of their advantages as well as disadvantages, and dare to speculate on their future. The essay argues in favor of continuing to broaden and deepen multinational formations, an effort which has been relatively successful so far. The main thesis of this essay is that the newly created multinational corps and divisions of NATO are a vital means to ensure Western security in the 21st Century.

There is unanimity in the West that alliances or coalitions will be the primary mean by which the West will fight wars in future, especially when acting within the framework of security organizations like UN or defense organizations like NATO. Therefore, at the military level, multinational formations will be the rule rather than the exception. Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Rwanda, Somalia and now Bosnia-Hercegovina are contemporary examples of multinational military operations. Today, closer political, economic and military cooperation amongst nations is required if the West is to respond effectively to the broad spectrum of acute and potential crises and conflicts. It is therefore indispensable that strategic and operational military thinking focus on combined operations to the same degree as it does on jointness.

Identifying the guiding principles that should guide the organization of multinational forces has been difficult to ascertain. A lot of planning considerations are contained in US Joint Pubs 1^1 , $0-2^2$, and $5-0^3$ as well as in the U.S. Army's FM 100- 5^4 . Since only little could be added without redundancies I shall approach this question from a different direction. Considering that since 1993 various nations have established multinational corps and divisions under the umbrella of the New Strategic Concept of NATO, I will shed some light onto the subject of "multinational forces" from the experience gained during the conceptual and development phase. I will highlight some of the advantages as well as disadvantages, and dare to speculate on their future. Admittedly, this article is biased to a certain degree. It is in favor of continuing further down the road to multinationality, a journey which has been successful so far, despite some problems and hindrances. Lessons learned from history show that in many cases the most promising way also turned out to be quite a rocky road.

The reader must keep in mind that the described form of multinational military cooperation is in contrast to ad-hoc coalitions. That is, they are established within the framework of an existing alliance. These formations have been established in a peacetime setting as a prearranged and firm commitment. NATO- multinational formations represent a specific organizational form of multinational cooperation which is future-oriented.

I am convinced that the newly created multinational Corps and Divisions of NATO are a vital step into the 21st Century, even though currently only a small minority of nations is prepared to commit their armed forces to deep integration together with the armed forces of other countries following the NATO model. But doesn't it make sense to create cohesive, well trained; and in terms of multinational cooperation, experienced formations now, if we agree with the logic that future operations will require such forces? Even if these forces are not employed exactly in the way they are organized in peacetime, they provide a reliable core upon which to build. Thus, for instance, the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC), is currently providing the core for NATO land forces in Bosnia.

While the NATO process of developing multinational forces is not making headlines, it may have far-reaching consequences for the future of the Alliance, as well as for the armed forces of some of its member states. The fact that U.S. Army Europe is providing considerable input to three multinational corps has met with little public response in the United States. For instance, no reference is made to this subject in official publications, such as "National Military Strategy 1995 of the United States of America" or "America's Army of The 21st Century Force XXI" Even members of the US military community are often not aware of this political and military commitment of U.S. forces. In contrast to the U.S.A., in Europe multinationality has been a topic that has received considerable attraction at the highest political levels. In 1991 former French President Francois Mitterrand and the German Chancellor Dr. Helmut Kohl personally initiated the establishment of the European Corps. The heads of government of both Germany and the

Netherlands, Dr. Kohl and Wim Kok, respectively, personally attended the activation ceremony of the German/Netherlands Corps in the fall of 1995. These two examples testify to the great political and military importance given to multinational forces in key European NATO countries.

The genesis of the multinational forces of NATO can be traced back to the first NATO summit after the fall of the "Berlin Wall". In their London declaration of July 1990⁷, the 16 heads of state and government of NATO's member nations decided on a profound reform of Alliance military strategy, their armed forces, and command structures. This step was taken to adapt the Alliance to changed parameters and the new challenges that have emerged after the Cold War. One of the core statements of the declaration was the confirmation of their intention to provide for even greater military integration. To wit: "The Alliance will increasingly rely on multinational forces and flexible multinational structures."

The declaration initiated a comprehensive process of consultation among NATO member states. A number of major multinational formations at the corps and division levels were established as a result of bi- or multilateral negotiations. These major units were activated in the time frame of 1993- 1995, and their staffs have meanwhile been able to gather some on-the-job experience in their day-to-day business as well as during exercises. One of the multinational formations, the ARRC, has already deployed to Bosnia. This action clearly demonstrates that these newly established units are not theoretical in nature, but have indeed taken shape, and have become a constant factor in NATO's force planning for crisis operations.

The six NATO multinational corps that are in existence in the Central Region are by no means structured along identical lines. At the time they were designed, there was no NATO "masterplan" to dictate their composition, and neither was it the Alliance's intention to

provide one. As a result, the corps are products of the sovereign will of the respective nations involved. Some differences are quite obvious. For example, the number of nations contributing to a corps varies from 2 (e.g., Corps LANDJUT) to 12 (e.g., the ARRC). One category, referred to as "framework corps" has one member state as the "lead nation", with others contributing by assigning divisions. The second category, which is called "integrated corps", provides for a jointly and equally exercised command authority. The authority that the nations confer upon the various corps commanders in peacetime and during operations differs depending on the contractual agreements concluded between the contributing nations. Finally, the potential range of operations of these formations, main defense or crisis reaction, provides another distinguishing criterion.

The U.S.A., among 12 other nations, participates in the ACE Rapid Reaction Corps⁹ The ARRC is earmarked mainly for crisis operations. The U.S. A. provides a division and elements of the corps troops. Two other multinational corps were established together with Germany on a reciprocal basis and based on the "lead nation" concept. One of the corps is under U.S. command (U.S. V Corps), with Germany providing a division, while the second corps is under German command (German II Corps), with the U.S.A. providing a division. These two corps are assigned "main defense" missions. ¹⁰ In addition to the above mentioned three corps with U.S. participation, a fourth corps referred to as EUROCORPS has been established as an integrated corps with Belgian, German, French, Luxembourg, and Spanish participation. The EUROCORPS has both reaction and main defense missions. The last two corps have been established by bilateral cooperation between Germany and the Netherlands, and Germany and Denmark¹¹, respectively.

Finally, Multinational Division Central (Airmobile)--MND(C) was established to complete the multinational lineup. MND(C) consists of airmobile brigades and portions of the division

troops from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. MND(C) has started as an experiment several years ago and has meanwhile developed into an effective and viable force suitable for a variety of missions and employment options. It may be deployed as part of the ACE Rapid Reaction Corps, but also as a separate unit for "reaction force" purposes. A similar division is planned for Allied Forces Southern Europe (Multinational Division South), with Greek, Italian and Turkish participation. This shows that an intense network of bilateral and multilateral force structures have been created under the "multinationality" concept, with the ground forces of the contributing nations being closely intertwined.

In principle, NATO is no stranger to the principle of multinationality; rather, it has been one of the alliance's main characteristics ever since it was established. It is a manifestation of political will and the determination of its member states to act in solidarity with each other. The concept has proven its worth without any doubt. From the beginning, NATO's integrated headquarters have been manned with personnel from the various nations. Working together under one roof has become a matter of course. Even multinational forces below the "integrated headquarters" command echelon are not something completely new, although so far they have been an exception to the rule (e.g., Corps LANDJUT and ACE Mobile Force--Land). Thus, the alliance can fall back on more than 35 years of experience with various integration models, and its list of achievements is quite impressive.

With its London (1990)¹³ and Rome (1991)¹⁴ summit declarations, NATO decided to increase multinationality and shift the level of integration from its Cold War army group, to corps level. This step toward increased multinationality is an indication of the new intensity of cooperation among the member nations. Indeed, NATO's Central Region has assumed a leading role in creating multinational forces, since all the corps mentioned above as well as the

Multinational Division Central are assigned to the Central Region, except for the Rapid Reaction Corps (whose mission is ACE-wide). Germany is conspicuous by its participation in all major multinational units, thus setting a clear signal for the future.

Enhanced military integration reflects NATO members' worldwide increase in overlapping interests caused by various factors, including

- the globalizing of economic problems,
- the use of modern communication technology,
- aggravating social conflicts which force the international community of nations into closer cooperation to counter the underlying causes.

The integration of national contingents into multinational structures has advantages and disadvantages, advocates and opponents. Both sides are able to give sound reasons to substantiate their arguments. Considering the matter from merely one point of view would not do justice to the subject.

Critics often cite a lack of efficiency as a major flaw of multinational units. No one will contest the fact that, given the same conditions and considering the matter solely with regard to their efficiency in combat, national units are more efficient than their multinational counterparts. However, such a partial view is incomplete, as Lieutenant General Michael J.D. Walker (UK), Commanding General of the ACE Rapid Reaction Corps and currently Ground Forces Commander of NATO Forces in Bosnia made clear in a statement:

Now, it would be dishonest if I said that a multinational force is always going to be much more effective than a national force. Clearly, if you have a national force conducting its own procedures and practices, that is probably the most effective way to carry out a military operation. But in the context of the modern idiom in which we find ourselves

having to conduct these operations, multinationality is in my view the only way for it.

Each nation brings to what is - that we're going to have to do - its own particular strength, and by developing those we are able to put together an overall force package which will allow us to have some answer to some of the military problems that face us around the world today. 15

An all-embracing approach to the assessment of efficiency must also include factors of a political nature, which are, of course, difficult to quantify..

Without doubt, cooperation within a multinational unit requires a greater effort from a pragmatical point of view. A joint basis in terms of language, thinking, and acting, which is a given fact in national units, needs to be worked out first. In many cases cooperation is made even more difficult by the lack of compatibility and interoperability of the various systems. Lessons learned from existing multinational units and "ad hoc coalitions" have shown, however, that this does not create insurmountable obstacles.

Advocates of unlimited national sovereignty fear that national contingents assigned to major multinational units will become unresponsive to their parent nations. Pointing out that national interests are not always compatible, they voice concerns that they may become dependent on their partner nations. This argument may be countered by stating that the requirement for a nation to establish consent with its partner nations prior to committing multinational troops will prevent them from going their separate ways and, therefore, will in principle not result in a disadvantage. Mutual dependence can develop into constructive mutual respect (e.g., Germany and France), and may thus very well be a desired outcome. Moreover, situations in which at least Western nations are willing, or able, to go their own way will be an exception anyway in the future. Principally, however, the final authority in all major multinational units as to the

decision on an operational commitment will always, perforce, rest with the sovereign state. No nation can be forced into taking a particular action against its will and interests merely because it is an integral part of a multinational structure.

The advantages of multinationality are both political and military in nature. The signal effect created by multinationality has remained unchanged in its political significance. It embodies the spirit of unity and solidarity within NATO. Multinationality bridges the gap between armies. Multinational units are a stabilizing factor both for the process of European integration and for the framework that unites NATO's European pillar with its North American counterpart. Multinational interaction sets the course for Europe in particular, since it supports the process of "growing together" and , therefore, directly supports the goal established by NATO that Europe should create a defense identity in its own right. In consequence, the creation of multinational units help ensure a combined U.S. future in Europe. This level of cooperation has the added characteristic of making armed forces a potential pacemaker for Europe.

Through military integration in the Alliance, generations of soldiers have learned to think beyond the limitations of the traditional national state, to do away with national prejudice, and to appreciate a supranational set of values as a basis for joint action. It is in this sense that multinational units will contribute in a perhaps subtle, but important way, in future. Primarily, multinational forces are becoming ever more important as an instrument of crisis management, both politically and militarily. Politically, because resolving conflicts has become an international mission, and militarily, because--quite understandably--no nation is prepared to accept the burden of international crisis management on its own. Thus, multinationality is not an end in itself, but a rational answer to future challenges. An equally shared risk and joint responsibility for all are the principles embodied in multinationality.

From a purely military point of view, multinational units make it possible to practice cooperation in peacetime to prepare for cooperation under the more demanding conditions of a military operation. Procedures of cooperation may be developed, tested, and practiced, allowing the alliance to use functional staffs and units whenever they are required. When faced with the necessity to form ad hoc coalitions, existing multinational structures may provide the core of an international force. It should be an uncontested fact among experts that falling back on something that is already in existence is more advantageous than having to start from scratch.

Given the considerable reduction of forces in Western Europe, these nations have to rely on each other to a much greater degree. The Alliance's smaller member states are especially afforded the opportunity to integrate their forces in a major operational unit, thus actively participating--by contributing personnel for leadership positions--at a command level which they alone could no longer sustain (i.e., Corps). This makes it possible to preserve, at least to some extent, military leadership experience which is essential in case of mobilization.

Indeed there are a number of NATO countries that are no longer able today to maintain, at the national level, all the capabilities required for the entire range of military operations. If participation in multinational forces leads to cross-complementing of available capabilities, and additionally permits a reasonable burden and workload-sharing, it may be for the mutual benefit of the smaller partner states. This allows maximum use of scarce resources for the Alliance and maintaining collective defense capabilities in spite of increasing budgetary constraints. NATO's larger member states would be unwise not to consider these aspects and not offering the smaller countries a berth to dock their remaining military forces. Solidarity within the alliance requires mutual consideration.

When multinational units were established, one question was which degree of responsibility and authority the various nations would be willing to grant to the commander of the multinational force in peacetime and during operations. In particular, this question was raised for those cases where a unit is headed by a commander from a different nation. Basically, what had to be decided was which command authority would be granted to the Multinational Force Commander. NATO nations hold different views on this matter. From the start, the U.S. Army pursued a restrictive policy which precluded the transfer of NATO OPCOM¹⁶ (similar to US OPCON) because of general national considerations, permitting only the transfer of NATO OPCON¹⁷ (which is similar to US TACOM). Other nations, including Germany, were open to both options, and thus willing to grant comprehensive command authority to the multinational commander. Germany made it a condition, however, that other nations, too, should agree to equally transfer OPCOM, based on the principle of reciprocity. A third group of nations, including the Netherlands, preferred OPCOM, which would allow maximum authority to be granted to the multinational commander and strengthen his position. As is customary in international negotiations, a minimum consensus was reached between the nations which makes the transfer of OPCON in wartime the rule, although with exceptions. For example, all four nations contributing to Multinational Division Central (Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom) have agreed to transfer OPCOM in wartime to its commander, who is provided on a rotating basis by the four nations.

Maximum mission performance during operations must be the standard by which to judge the degree of authority to be granted. A commander whose authority is limited to NATO OPCON, and who consequently cannot task organize ("fragment") his forces or (re)assign missions, is restricted in his tactical or operational freedom of action. In 1994/95 the U.S. Army War

College published the proceedings of the Central Region Chiefs of Army Staffs (CR-CAST) working group on command authorities required for a Multinational Force Commander. The final report states: "Under Article V, OPCOM is the appropriate command authority for NATO forces. Any lesser command authority will place constraints on the Multinational Force Commander that will increase risk." Related to Non-Article V missions the study concludes: "... that OPCON was the minimum command authority required." The Working Group recommends the need to overcome existing restrictions to assigning OPCOM to a NATO Multinational Force Commander. It is now the responsibility of the nations to reconsider the issue, making sure that the newly established major multinational units are not rendered less effective than their national counterparts.

As a general rule, multinational force commanders should be granted in peacetime the command authorities commensurate with their operational responsibilities. As a matter of fact in existing multinational corps, they have been granted, as a minimum, responsibility for: operation planning and preparation, exercises, and access to information. As regards access to information, the multinational commander must not be denied any information vital to his situation assessment concerning the capabilities of his own forces. Transparency is an essential requirement for multinational units to function.

The extent to which the types of authority discussed above are to be transferred to the commander of another nation will depend on how much integration in multinational units is desired. If some nations try to achieve enhanced multinational cooperation exceeding the customary level of military cooperation within NATO, reviews must be made on a case-by-case basis in keeping with the applicable laws of the nations involved to determine which sovereign rights may be transferred to a commander who is a citizen of another nation. Germany and the

Netherlands, for example, have declared their intention to review the transfer of the most comprehensive authority to the multinational commander of their joint corps and, if need be, to initiate appropriate national legislative changes.

Multinationality is a special challenge not only to military leaders and their troops, but to planners, the armament sector and, last but not least, private industry. Multinationality requires intensive efforts in terms of training and exercises to ensure smooth cooperation between the various national contingents. These efforts need to be geared mainly toward leaders and staffs at and above division level, for they are the mainstay of international cooperation. Regardless of some exceptions, the corps will have authority and responsibility to conduct multinational exercises in the future. Emerging NATO practice is that for division and higher echelons, multinational exercises are to have priority over national ones. That is an important requirement, given the scarce resources available and the restrictions imposed on exercise activities. The multinational commander also should be granted the right to avail himself of the major units earmarked for his command, because multinational forces cannot meet the demands made on them without adequate and effective training. For companies, battalions, and brigades, which will continue to operate in a national environment, there will be no changes. Consequently, the training of units below division level will remain a national responsibility. Major multinational units will have to develop standardized procedures and doctrines for the cooperation of national contingents, a task which is not going to place too great a burden on staffs and troops, as they are familiar with it from past experience.

Multinationality will require enhanced efforts in the fields of compatibility, interoperability, and standardization of equipment. Certainly, it is not realistic--and not even necessary for that matter--to demand an equal allowance of equipment for major multinational units, as such a

standard would be too difficult to achieve. What is essential here may be described by a simple formula: maintain contacts, operate jointly, and provide mutual support. Compatibility alone will not be enough, and commonality will likely not be feasible because of the high cost involved, which leaves the two levels of interchangeability and interoperability as a compromise between what is desirable and what is feasible. Quite often national economic and political considerations have prevented greater progress in this field. It remains to be hoped for that there will be a change of mind at least in some key areas. Budget constraints and the necessity for the armaments industries to cooperate closely across borders because of a decrease in procurement orders and production numbers leave room for hope. Armaments cooperation theoretically allows us to use scarce resources more economically by concentration of resources, expense sharing for research and development, and higher cost-effectiveness in manufacturing through larger production series. A condition for such close cooperation concerning armament projects, however, would be the involved parties' willingness to forego the principle of autarchy and, consequently, their preparedness to accept mutual and equal dependence. Dispensing with autarchy and creating dependence in this particular, very sensitive field of security policy is tantamount to surrendering a part of national sovereignty. While this concept may prevent some nations from joining the others on the path discussed above, the pressure on them to join is bound to increase as time goes by.

As regards signals, multinational units are facing a particular challenge. This is true for ensuring communications as well as for the exchange of data and information, especially reconnaissance results, target data, etc. The various national systems must be able to communicate with each other. In those cases where standardization of equipment would be the best solution

possible but will be out of reach, efforts should be made to at least achieve the interoperability of command, control and communications systems through interfaces.

As for logistics, MC 319 "NATO Principles and Policies for Logistics" has already paved the way for giving up the almost exclusive national responsibility in this field. According to this document, nations and NATO commands are collectively responsible for providing logistic support for multinational NATO operations. This creates a basis for multinational forces which, while not solving all the problems, enhances the forces' efficiency in specific situations. Similar progress has been achieved for the medical service through MC 326 "Directives and Guidelines for Medical Support".

Within the context of enhanced multinational cooperation, the question will be raised as to the task- and/ or role-sharing or the pooling of assets, starting with the question to what extent the various partners of the alliance will be able to provide greater mutual relief and support. This problem will be of less concern for larger states than it will be for the smaller nations. Some countries may be forced--or decide voluntarily--to impose restrictions as to the range of their national capabilities. The determining factor in these considerations is going to be not so much their free will than the limitations imposed by budget cuts and increasing cost for the procurement of new systems. Until countries will agree on taking the--now seemingly revolutionary--approach to task- and role-sharing while foregoing certain capabilities, the pooling of assets will be the desired way, especially for capabilities of a more general nature. Capabilities which have so far been limited to the United States (such as strategic transport or satellite reconnaissance assets) seem within reach for European allies when pooling their assets.

The enhancement of military integration, which was initiated at the NATO summits in London and Rome, is a convincing concept considering the process of political unification in

Europe, the reduction of armed forces in many member states of the alliance, and the requirement to make cost-saving use of scarce resources. The established multinational major formations are a viable force. To continue to enhance their effectiveness must be the common goal of the participating countries. This is the key for the continued political legitimacy and sustained financial support.

Multinationality must be developed further, which, first of all, requires the political will to do so. It then requires the effort to tackle administrative and legal problems related to a deep integration and close cooperation, and to overcome hindrances.

Today, security and freedom of action are guaranteed not by autonomy but by integration.

National identity and multinational cooperation are not a contradiction but complement each other. However, multinationality is not an issue limited to armed forces structures. Rather, it is to be understood as a comprehensive program for the future, focusing national efforts on a joint objective.

We may safely say that the current multinational structures have not yet reached their final stage. The continuing dynamic development process in the field of security policy within NATO, and especially in Europe, determines the perspective of multinationality. Whatever one may think of multinationality, it certainly is an improvement over a purely national outlook. The alternative to multinationality is to revert to re-nationalization, and thus to step back from the 21st to the 20th century.

Notes

8 lbid.

¹U.S. Department of Defense, <u>Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States</u>, Washington D.C., 10 January 1995

 $^{^2}$ U.S. Department of Defense, <u>Unified Action Armed Forces</u>, Washington D.C., 24 February 1995

³U.S. Department of Defense, <u>Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations</u>, Washington D.C., 13 April 1995

⁴US Department of the Army, FM 100-5 Operations, Washington D.C., 14 June 1993

⁵U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, <u>National Military Strategy of the United States</u> of America, Washington D.C., 1995

 $^{^6}$ U.S. Department of the Army, <u>America's Army of the 21st Century Force XXI</u>, Ft. Monroe, VA, 15 January 1995

 $^{^{7}}$ Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government at the NATO summit, London, July, 1990.

⁹Participating nations are: Belgium, Canada, Demark, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Turkey, United Kingdom , and the United States.

 $^{^{10}\,\}mathrm{The}$ German/U.S. and U.S./German Corps were activated in April 1993.

¹¹The German/Danish Corps is the oldest of the existing multinational Corps (established in 1970) and is better known under the NATO terminology "Corps LANDJUT"

 $^{^{12}\}mathrm{Multinationality}$ was the rule above corps level.

 $^{^{13}}$ Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government at the NATO summit, London, 1990

 $^{^{14}}$ Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government at the NATO summit, Rome, November 1991

¹⁵Lieutenant General Michael J.D. Walker: Statement on Multinational Forces, published in: Multinationale Verbände- Effiziez durch Integration, Film der Deutschen Bundeswehr, interviewed by: Ernst Martin, Bonn, May 1995.

 $^{^{16}}$ The authority granted to a commander to assign missions or tasks to subordinate commanders, to deploy units, to reassign forces, and to retain or delegate operational and/ or tactical control as may be deemed necessary. It does not of itself include responsibility for administration or logistics. May also be used to denote the forces assigned to a commander (AAP-6, 1992 "NATO Glossary of Terms").

¹⁷ The authority delegated to a commander to direct forces assigned so that the commander may accomplish specific missions or tasks which are usually limited by function, time, or location; to deploy units concerned, and to retain or assign tactical control to those units. It does not include authority to assign separate employment of components of the units concerned. Neither does it, of itself, include administrative or logistic control (AAP-6, 1992 "NATO Glossary of Terms").

¹⁸U.S. Army War College, <u>Multinational Force Command Authorities Handbook:</u>
Proceedings of the Central Region-Chiefs of Army Staff Working Group on
Command Authorities required for a Multinational Force Commander, Carlisle, 1
September 1, 1995, page 7.

¹⁹ lbid. page 8

²⁰libd. page 15